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The university which has had the temerity to change the world has not had the nerve to change itself to live in that world. The result is that the university's grading system, curriculum, teaching methods, and philosophies are in conflict with the world beyond the campus gates, and higher education does not meet the intellectual and social needs of today's youth. Of the people within the academic community who have responsibility to consider the possibility of change, the professor is the most important. The central issues seem to be the problems of students in the university and the kind of teacher the university makes available to the students. There are many individual programs underway at some colleges and universities, but too many institutions have, in the name of maintaining standards, fenced out the children of the poor and the victims of discrimination. Something special needs to be done for post-secondary education that is not graduate-school oriented. This would involve a wider array of subjects rather than specialization in one field or in research that leads to the Ph.D. Academic credit could be earned by all students who particpate in university-sponsored social action programs on or off campus. The training of prospective teachers should include specialized knowledge and skills that equip them to work effectively with students at post-secondary levels, particularly at the growing number of junior colleges. (WM)

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HOWE, HAROLD II

HIGHER EDUCATION'S STRANGE PARADOX (Speech before the 54th Annual Meeting of the American Association of University Professor, Washington, D.C. April 26. 1968

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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# HIGHER EDUCATION'S STRANGE PARADOX*

An Address by Harold Howe II
U.S. Commissioner of Education
Department of Health, Education, and Welfare

If I read my cues correctly, one of the functions of a speaker on this occasion is to welcome you to the host city. I am happy to do so, but I must say that welcoming members of this audience to Washington is something like welcoming Lyndon Johnson to Texas or J. Edgar Hoover to the FBI.

In these days of university-government togetherness, few professors are strangers to Washington. They come here on many missions, in the course of which they sometimes find themselves on the other side of a desk from another professor who is gamely devoting a portion of his career to the salvation of the Federal bureaucracy.

In any event, you are always welcome here, whether as members of learned gatherings, as donors of fresh thinking and unwearied blood to the Washington establishment, or avid seekers for Federal research grants.

Higher education today represents a striking contradiction, an extraordinary paradox for which you people are largely responsible. What I have in mind is the proposition that professors who live in the realm of higher education and largely control it are boldly reshaping the world outside the campus gates while neglecting to make corresponding changes to the world within. As a result of this neglect of

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the campus world, many of the students who inhabit it have become disenchanted. They are disaffected and disgruntled with what is going on in the universities; and they cannot understand why university professors who are responsible for the reach into space, for splitting the atom, and for the interpretation of man's journey on earth seem unable to find the way to make the university pertinent to their lives.

While our economy and society have charged pellmell into the bright, new practices of the 20th century, the colleges and universities where you live and work have proceeded at a gentlemanly canter, a graceful pace that doesn't work up much lather or cover much ground. It is my observation that with some minor exceptions, college students of the pre World War II era would be quite at home with the ways of teaching found in a large proportion of classes today. They might be somewhat disconcerted by the informality of some present campus arrangements, but they would be comfortable with the familiar relationship between student and professor and the prevailing assumptions about teaching and learning.

Among the differences a student of the 1930's might notice are that professors spend less time teaching and are somewhat less accessible than they used to be. However, the lecture and marking system, the routines expected in the library, the papers to be prepared and handed in, and a whole pride of other traditional practices would be about the same. And so would many of the assumptions about the relationship of the university to the students.

The colleges and universities are full of brilliant people who examine the human animal cell by cell and analyze his social, economic and political institutions volume by volume. But it is reasonable to question whether the colleges and universities have spent enough time examining the ways they teach and researching the human and emotional needs as well as the intellectual requirements of 20th century young Americans who are growing up in a brand new world. The student discontent that has boiled up on so many college campuses says that perhaps they have not.

These young people are looking for an education that will fit them for an incredibly complex world that makes tremendous new demands on the citizenry of a democracy. It is a world in which a great many jobs are being automated out of existence; a world in which there will be a high proportion of leisure time (the most recent prediction I have seen says that within 17 years Americans will have to work only six months a year to maintain the standard of living they have now); a world which will allow almost instantaneous audiovisual communications between persons all over the globe; a world in which knowledge is created so rapidly that specialists arise in new fields as quickly as experts in old fields find themselves out of date.

Nor can the student forget that this is a world which for the first time has at its constant disposal a capacity to destroy itself.

Unfortunately, it is also a world in which the older generation everywhere is suspect in the eyes of the younger. Youth mistrusts

those who seem so attached to the past that they cannot slip its leash and explore some of the fresh possibilities that surround us.

If some of the younger people are hippies and activists, if some are experimenting with a more liberal sexual code or new kinds of Utopias or seeking a greater sensitivity to moral and ethical issues, those of us who represent the traditional and who control the colleges and universities, where these young people are, must ask ourselves what we have done to make these institutions sensitive and responsive to the needs and feelings of today's young men and women.

The question might be put this way: "Are our colleges and universities really educating their students for life in this rapidly changing world; are they adjusting their stance to accommodate these changes?"

In his book on self-renewal, John Gardner, former Secretary of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, said: "Unless we attend to the requirements of renewal, aging institutions and organizations will eventually bring our civilization to moldering ruin."

He felt that our future leaders should be educated for "an accelerating rate of change...for creativity...openness... independence...and flexibility;" they should be prepared to "welcome the future and the change it may bring."

Is this the case now? I rather doubt it.

That may be one reason why we are now seeing the emergence of dynamic new institutions and organizations that are taking over what I would consider to be some of the proper functions of higher education.

A conspicuous example is the "think tank". Most of today's pressing problems do not lend themselves to discipline-oriented solutions. Poverty, integration, defense, transportation, space exploration, economic development, and deterioration of the cities cry out for creative, interdisciplinary thinking. The university, with its departmental structure, seems ill-equipped to respond.

Some of our brightest and most articulate students are calling for the development of courses that they perceive as being more relevant, personally involving, and socially responsible. And since higher education has, for the most part, turned a deaf ear to their call, some of these students have moved to create the so-called "free university". They have designed a counter-curriculum which is providing them with the sort of education they feel they need for a world that is changing before their eyes. They are forging a philosophy which says that the individual learner should take responsibility for his own education, set his own goals, and draw on appropriate sources for knowledge. In short, he should learn how to learn.

Moreover, since the start of the civil rights movement of the early 60's, many of these students have shown an increasing desire for social action. While the universities were doing relatively little to provide an opportunity for "good works," President Kennedy created the Peace Corps, the Office of Economic Opportunity set up VISTA, and the National Students Association established a Tutorial Assistance Center

which now coordinates the activities of more than a quarter-million students who are lending a hand to disadvantaged youth.

Areas that remain to be adequately tapped by the universities are those of emotions and personal values and interpersonal relations. We hear a great deal about alienation these days, but this may be only the forerunner of a much more intense depersonalization in the future. As our population increases in density and mobility, there will be even fewer opportunities for forming meaningful relationships in large impersonal institutions and organizations. In a few places, psychologists, behavioral scientists, and educators are devising and developing new ways of breaking down the barriers to honest communication between individuals. But so far these activities are not widely in vogue at colleges and universities across the country.

At this point let me recognize that I may be guilty of being over-critical.

In the first place, I realize that some of you honestly feel that there can be such a thing as too much academic free-wheeling. As Provost Edward H. Levi, the President-Designate of Chicago University recently said: "A university which claims to be all things to all people, or as many different things as different groups wish it to be, is deceitful, or foolish or both."

Also, I am aware that many among you share my impatience with the more ossified aspects of university tradition. You do slip the leash

whenever possible: you do encourage your students to think for themselves; you do view the accepted rigidities of organization with severe skepticism. A student from the 1930's might well find you a stimulating and unfamiliar bird. He might also find your name in the newspapers for having allowed students to listen to forbidden speakers or to speak unspeakable words.

I am encouraged, too, by small but unmistakable signs of institutional change.

The newly created Old Westbury campus of the State University of New York, I see, is pioneering a new "education-in-action" program. The students will spend a substantial part of their time living and learning off-campus--in teaching, in community action, and in other public service assignments both here and abroad. This will be complemented by a rigorous and intensive academic program which revolves around a common humanities seminar, workshops, special seminars, and independent study. "Responsibility for one's own learning, in college as in life," will be the operating principle.

At Michigan State University, the University of Michigan, and the University of California campus at Santa Cruz, "living-learning" units are being developed to encourage student and student-faculty dialogue.

Bucknell is developing a system of individually prescribed instruction which allows each student to move at his own pace.

At Sonoma State College in California there is a major program in humanistic psychology.

Syracuse University has a video tape and computer-mediated response system which relieves the instructor of much didactic presentation of information, while allowing him to get immediate and sophisticated feedback from his students.

I don't know exactly who has been responsible for innovations such as these. I hope it was some of you gentlemen who are listening to me so patiently today. But for the benefit of those of you who have been reluctant about such adventures, let me raise a few questions to which you might seek answers. Indeed I would suggest that some of your students deserve to be heard on these matters.

For example, is your present grading system adequate? Is it providing the student with the sort of evaluative feedback he needs to guide his learning? Can the fine distinctions it makes be honestly defended? Does it operate as a basis for improving achievement in learning or is it simply a sorting out system?

Is your discipline-oriented departmental structure providing the knowledge and skills necessary to solve highly complex interrelated problems and to encourage students to explore such problems?

Are your hiring and promotion policies attracting and holding the sort of faculty members you need to stimulate your students?

Is your curriculum providing a wide enough spread of courses that are relevant to life in tomorrow's world?

Is your admissions policy discriminating against often ill-prepared disadvantaged and minority group students?

Does your mammoth system of credits, requirements, prerequisites, and standings discourage creativity, flexibility, initiative, and risk-taking?

Is your institutional reward system promoting scientific research while devaluing undergraduate instruction?

Are you doing all you can for your surrounding community, or do you stand like a walled citadel, aloof from the pressing social issues of the day?

Are you attending to the requirements of institutional renewal, or are you willing inhabitants of "aging institutions and organizations (which) will eventually bring our civilization to moldering ruin?" How does your institution differ from its character of 15 years ago? What do you want it to be 15 years from now?

Although I cannot provide the answers to these questions, it is to matters such as these that the faculty of a university or college as well as the administration and the college trustees must address themselves. If there is to be meaningful change in higher education, the professors who really run the place by their rigid control of the departmental structure are going to have to be the ones to bring it about.

You may feel that I have overemphasized both your power and your shortcomings in this vital matter. I think not. I am well aware of

the academic priorities established for you by the "publish or perish" tradition, and I do not exempt the trustees and administration from a share of the moral obligation to up-date the role of the university. Nevertheless, I am convinced that the ultimate power to make these changes is yours.

The periodical Columbia College Today devoted most of a recent issue to an article entitled "Who's Running Our Colleges?" Let me quote a brief extract dealing with the faculty:

"The deans...have relied very heavily upon persons whom most analysts of higher education agree are the new men of power in modern college and university life--the department heads. As scholars have shifted a greater portion of their loyalties from the students and the institutions to their academic disciplines, the chairman of the department...has become more like a feudal lord who contributes troops and services to the king and the realm. The academic department is now, on most campuses, the basic academic unit, with key control over educational policy, programs, and personnel."

Henry Wriston, former president of Brown University, is quoted as saying: "A President cannot boss a faculty these days. It is rare indeed when he can lead it."

With full appreciation for these well-earned powers and prerogatives, let me point out a particular area where I think professors can and must make the difference.

The President's Commission on Civil Disorders pointed out that while this Nation is committed to the goal of equal opportunity for higher education for every American, this goal remains for the disadvantaged student an unfilled promise. In March of 1968, the Southern Education Report surveyed 215 senior colleges and universities widely considered to be those most likely to have formal programs for "high risk" students. The Report found that almost half of them had no such programs and concluded: "Most American colleges and universities are success-oriented--they cater to young people who have mastered 12 years of schooling in preparation for college, are solvent and who have adjusted to the style and strictures of the prevailing culture. But thousands of potentially able youngsters do not qualify by those standards and most of the Nation's colleges and universities have not yet decided whether they have the responsibility, the resources, the skills or the desire to serve them."

The disservice done to such young people--and for that matter to the Nation by our failure to capitalize on the resources they offer--struck me as particularly challenging as I reflected on the bitter events of three weeks ago. If there is to be meaning to the otherwise senseless death of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., we must act on every possible front to achieve the goals for which he gave his life.

A similar reaction was expressed in a fine letter I received a few days ago from the Dean of Education at one of our leading State

universities. He made two specific recommendations that I would like to quote to you:

> First, I believe we should call on every institution of higher learning to establish special programs on a large scale to identify, select and train minority groups for participation in academic and vocational pursuits. By waiving normal admission requirements, by providing massive special tutoring and other academic and non-academic help to assist students in making the transition to college life, by expanding normal university-associated employment and creating special scholarships to render further financial aid, and by adding minorities to their faculties and staff on more than a token basis, schools can commence to lend their resources to the most challenging issue facing our society today.
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> Secondly, we should call on the student body of the nation to render unprecedented volunteer service in collaboration with the programs organized by universities. While tutoring has been the activity of a few well-motivated students in recent years, it must be developed to the level of a systematic campus-wide, nationwide program, involving not only academic subjects, but personal and social skill programs as well. Naturally, all of these action-oriented programs should be developed with extensive leadership from those minorities they are intended to serve. In addition, the universities and colleges must develop means of granting academic credit for the above activities, making them integral to the academic life of the school. Such a program might become the vanguard of new concepts of social relevance, opening alternative routes to a Bachelor's degree.

I would recommend that you as concerned individuals and the American Association of University Professors as a concerned organization take up such challenges as these--challenges that are most striking in the case of our Negro citizens but that are no less acute for the Mexican-Americans, the American Indians, and the Puerto Ricans.

This is all I have to say to you about the possibilities I see for turning the face of higher education toward the future in the

interest of serving the students. Now, let me say one or two things briefly about the relationship between colleges and universities and the total world of education.

I think you will agree that a major function of our colleges and universities is to provide training in basic knowledge and teaching skills for those who will teach the students of the future. When I speak of students of the future I mean those at all levels, but I would like to focus on one level that has a special relationship for college and university professors--the training of persons to serve as faculty members for junior colleges, the fastest-growing educational institutions in the United States, and teachers of undergraduates in four-year colleges.

In my view, the processes that university graduate schools now maintain to serve these two special needs of undergraduate education are inadequate and unreasonably inflexible. Most universities maintain a variety of departmental courses which fit in one way or another into the devious route to the doctorate. They assume that although students headed for junior college teaching may not be candidates for the Ph.D. degree, they can make out all right if they simply take fewer of the courses designed for the Ph.D. candidate and end up with a Master's degree in English or some other subject field. This typical practice results in teacher training which is satisfactory neither for the undergraduate teacher nor for his students.

The more logical alternative is a specially designed program that includes some particular courses which will prepare a teacher to work with the real needs of the students he will encounter in a community college or undergraduate college. For example, if he is teaching English, some of his students will need remedial work. So he ought to have an exposure to linguistics, real practice in teaching writing to people who are not proficient at it, and considerable skill in teaching oral English. These skills are not likely to emerge from the kind of training a prospective teacher gets by moving part way to the Ph.D. or even getting the Ph.D. itself.

If the needs of the community colleges and undergraduate four-year colleges of this country are to be met, the academic departments of the major universities -- not the schools of education -- are going to have to make some adjustments. They are going to have to devise courses which are not addressed to the development of research competence or to intensive and narrow explorations of special fields. Instead, they must provide broader surveys, more concern about the actual skills of teaching developed through practicum of various kinds, and some effort to broaden departmental offerings so that they reach wider areas than those sometimes described by a particular subject field.

In addition, some attention to learning theory, educational sociology, and the psychological development of young people might help the prospective college teacher. Traditional research degree patterns don't allow much time for such concerns.

I would be the last to argue against a reasonable proportion of persons holding Ph.D. degrees in undergraduate colleges but I do not really think that every member of a college faculty needs a Ph.D. degree and I am sure that there are many high school teachers who could do a masterful job with college freshmen and sophomores. The real goal is good teachers, teachers who understand students and have an interest in working with them. I would in fact be prepared to argue that the Ph.D. degree may be a barrier in some cases to this kind of effective teacher-student relationship.

The major academic departments in universities tend to say that the special programs necessary to prepare teachers for degrees of less prestige than the Ph.D. should be offered in schools of education, not in the major departments of the arts and sciences. This seems to me a head-in-the-sand attitude, if those departments want to have any effect on the quality of higher education and make any contribution to the rest of the world of education. Entirely too many professors in graduate schools are interested only in the kind of teaching which produces more professors in graduate schools.

Happily, according to the Report of the Committee on Undergraduate Teaching shortly to be issued by the Hazen Foundation, there is now a decided trend toward correcting this situation among many of our graduate faculties. Unless we can expand this interest in preparing enough people to be good teachers of the growing number of youngsters

who will enter higher education but will not go to graduate school, we will miss an important source of stimulation to the broad world of higher education as it is developing in America.

These, then, are the three complaints I would submit to you:

1. That the university which has had the temerity to change the world has not had the nerve to change itself to live in that world.
2. That entirely too many colleges have, in the name of maintaining standards, fenced out the children of the poor and the victims of discrimination.
3. That the obligation of university departments to do something special for post secondary education which is not graduate school oriented is now inadequately met.

If I seem to have stated these three items in excessively strong terms, it is simply because my experience tells me that the best way to accomplish anything is to aggravate somebody sufficiently to get him interested in taking action. I recognize, of course, that there are many individual movements afoot to do something about the issues I have raised. We in the Office of Education will try to do our share, although we have no appropriate role in the internal affairs of colleges and universities, since these are independent entities which determine their own purposes and choose the means to carry them out.

We do, however, have some capacity to encourage any constructive change our advisers in the colleges and universities may describe.

I think that many of them would describe the need in much the same terms as I have used here today. You will therefore find us endeavoring to provide public funds--through the Education Professions Development Act and other legislation--to those institutions which are adventurous enough to devise programs addressed to the kinds of problems I have been discussing with you.

Let me close by saying that of the people in the colleges and universities who have a responsibility to consider possibilities of change, you are perhaps the most important. It is clear to me that you are already on such a course, for I have become familiar with suggestions your organization is making to open the university further in the sense of giving rights and privileges and responsibilities to students. Without commenting in detail on all the suggestions you have made, I can tell you how glad I am that you are using this occasion to examine those problems further. The problems of the student in the university and of the kind of teacher a university makes available to that student seem to me the central issues in the immediate future. That is why I have talked to you about them, and that is why I am glad you will be talking about them to each other.

Thank you very much.

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